As a larva he is, of course, quite impossible. The one I found on an ash was such a perfect twig that he put the real twigs to shame. He out-Heroded Herod; he was *plus royaliste que le roi.* He knew much better than the tree what an ash twig really ought to look like. Indeed, it was a marval that he did not burst into leaf. So proud was he of his mimicry that he refused to budge and I had to stimulate his backside with a grass-stem. Protesting loudly, he at last consented to enter the box. Inside it he lay inert for a moment or two; then, realising that something had gone wrong, he rushed around looking for a twig to imitate. Finding none, he gripped the petiole of a leaf with his claspers, swayed to and fro, chattering with rage, then sulked all the way home. But he made a most lovely moth, and that was the main thing, wasn't it?

Of *lunaria's* larva I say nothing at all: his sole object in life is to outdo *tetralunaria,* and he usually succeeds. If birds wasps and other predaceous animals hunted their meat by sight alone the Lunar Thorn would be one of our commonest insects. He is *sui generis,* he is an abnormity, a *lusus naturae.* And he is the forerunner of a very lovely and not too common moth.

Hydrillula palustris Hübn. (Lep. Caradrinidae) in Lincolnshire

By D. O'Keeffe

On the nights of 9th and 10th June 1972, my friend Bernard Skinner took 32 male *palustris* in a locality in Lincolnshire indicated to him as a likely place for the species. He was unable to divulge the exact locality, which had been mentioned to him in confidence, but he did tell me that it was quite unlike the conventional localities for this species (i.e. Woodwalton and Chippenham Fen), it being open ground, only slightly marshy and the sort of waste land on the verge of farm-land that is just a little too wet for cultivation, especially in winter.

I concluded there must be many such spots in the Lincolnshire Fen districts, and so on 12th June, I set off more with hope than optimism to try my luck.

Arriving in East Lincolnshire about 9.00 p.m. I had one hour to find a site for my M.V. lamps, and driving around I soon noted several promising looking spots. By 10.00 p.m. dusk was fast approaching, and so I finally decided to try a rough piece of ground, covered with tussocks of grass interspersed by patches of rushes. The ground flora was quite rich but in the fading light and my haste to set up my equipment, I was unable to take much note of the various plants that grew there but was struck by the masses of dewberry growing over the ground, and amongst the other plants, there were only a few scattered patches of *Spiraea.*

Just before my arrival there had been a heavy shower, so that everything was soaking wet, and with no wind, a thick mist soon arose. With nothing on the wing at dusk, my spirits sank, and any hope I had of seeing *palustris* rapidly began to evaporate.

At midnight I decided to try and get some sleep, but before doing so, went to top up my generator with petrol. As I approached one of my traps, I saw a solitary moth fluttering round the lamp in a manner which I did not recognise, except that it resembled a large *Nonagria neurica* or *dissoluta*. I quickly boxed the moth, which proved to be a male *palustris*, unfortunately rather worn. I excitedly examined the contents of my traps finding a further 13 male *palustris* had already arrived but only two were in good enough condition to keep

As Mr Skinner had not seen *palustris* before 1.15 a.m., and by midnight I already had 14, I had visions of quite a harvest by morning. However, when I packed up at 4.00 a.m. not a single additional moth of any kind was to be seen. It was a very poor night for other species, with only about 50 individuals of 12 species to my lights.

Judging by my experience and that of Bernard Skinner, I am confident that *palustris* will prove to be widespread and locally common in suitable terrain from the Cambridgeshire Fens northwards to near the Humber, and especially around The Wash.

Edelston *et al.* writing in 1944 (*Entomologist* **79**: 70) pointed the way to correct places in which to look for *palustris* and I quote: ". . . The discovery of larvae in their natural surroundings, and notably their relative abundance in different situations, renders possible some estimate of the condition most suitable to the species. These are not, in our experience the more luxuriant parts of the fen, where the vegetation is dense and high, but rather where there is a tussocky growth of grass, e.g. of *Calamagrostis epigejos* (L) with patches of *Spiraea* . . . Rather are they the margins where swampy area joins the drier land, or lightly grazed cattle marshes containing the herbage a good proportion of *Spiraea* and other marsh vegetation . . . In fact, the ecological conditions that appear favourable to H. palustris are not uncommon, in many parts of the country and it would be interesting to know whether the species is not very much more widely distributed than has so far been realised."

I hope that these notes will encourage other lepidopterists to seek out *palustris* in new areas durng the coming season.

BRITISH AUCTIONS OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

I am engaged in compiling for publication in 1973, a *Register of British Natural History Auctions from the Earliest Times (1700-1972)*, and should be glad to hear as soon as possible from anyone who may have collections of sale catalogues for the period prior to 1900.—J. M. CHALMERS-HUNT.